

*Guided Gospel Meditations*



*By*  
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Guided Gospel Meditation, using a passage from scripture, is a way of praying that uses all the senses. It comes from the tradition of Saint Ignatius. Through this type of prayer, we grow in the love, knowledge and wisdom of God and we grow as friends of Jesus, who draws us ever closer to God, the Father.

Before you begin each meditation the following may help you to relax, to find silence, to enter more deeply into the Word of God.

- Light a Candle
- Ask for the gift of the Holy Spirit to help you enter deeply into this time of prayer
- Sit comfortably in your chair, feet separately on the floor, back against the chair back, hands loosely clasped and resting on your lap.
- Breathing in, lift shoulders up to your ears; breathing out, let them drop and relax. Do this three times.
  - Breathing in, clench torso in and up; breathing out, let go and relax. Repeat three times.
  - Breathing in, clench arms and hands; breathing out, let go and relax. Repeat three times. • Now close your eyes and imagine you are sitting on a sandy beach listening to the tranquil breathing of the sea.
- Imagine you are lifting handfuls of sand.....imagine it trickling through your fingers...like warm silk.....
- Listen to the rhythm of the sea as the waves go in and out.....breathe in with the sea to the count of six.....
- Breathe out with the sea to the count of eight.....
- Repeat three times.....
- Now gently open the door of your mind to the meditation which is to follow.

## Jesus Washes His Disciples' Feet

Imagine you are in a large room in a house, a dining – room.....with a long table set for a meal.....It is the feast of the Passover, and those present are sharing a special Passover meal with their master, Jesus. Imagine you are also seated at the table.....and you are looking into the face of Jesus.....his eyes are filled with compassion and love for all present, but you notice that there is also a trace of sadness in his eyes.....you are aware that his time for leaving his loved ones is drawing near.....He has come from God and soon he will be returning to God.....He is facing into the agony of the Cross.....before him lies terrible, terrible pain; terrible, terrible suffering.....he will be mocked, humiliated, scourged with whips, crowned with thorns.....and made to carry his own cross to the place where they will nail him to it.....he will experience loneliness..... darkness.....despair.....he will experience betrayal by those he loves.....

But now..... He is sharing his last meal on earth with his friends before he goes to his death.....The Last Supper.....and you are sharing this last supper with Jesus..... Think of the privilege..... don't take your eyes off Jesus.....he knows what is lying ahead of him.....but his face is full of love and gentleness as he looks about him at everyone present, including you..... look into his beautiful face.....And now, before the meal has ended, Jesus gets up, wraps a towel about his waist, takes a bowl, fills it with warm, scented water.....and begins to wash his disciples' feet.....think about it.....Jesus, the Son of God.....the long awaited Christ.....insisting on washing the feet of his disciples..... Grimy, as they are, with the filth of the streets..... And Peter, who loves Jesus, passionately.....Jesus, his Lord and Master.....is having none of it.....

“Lord,” he asks in astonishment, “are you going to wash my feet?”

And Jesus answers.....”Now you do not understand what I am doing, but later, you will understand”.....

Reflect on Jesus' words.....what do you think his words mean?.....

Now Peter says passionately. “Never! You shall never wash my feet.”

And Jesus says, ”Peter, if I do not wash your feet, you can have no share in my life.”

Peter bows his head and says, “Well then, Lord, wash not only my feet, but my hands and my head also.”

“No, Peter,”

Reflect on this exchange between Jesus and Peter.....what do you think it means?.....

And now, to your amazement, Jesus is coming towards you with the bowl of scented water.....he kneels in front of you and gently lifts your feet, grimy as they are with the dust and dirt of the road on which you have been travelling, and he tenderly places them in the bowl of water. How do you feel? How do you feel as the Son of God, the Saviour of Mankind, kneels in front of you and washes your feet as if you were his beloved child?.....Look into his beautiful face and feel his gentle presence.....

Jesus sits once again at the table.....He looks around at all present and asks if you have understood what he has done for you.....

“Do you understand what I have done for you? You call me Master, Teacher, Lord, and, yes, that is what I am. So, I, your Master, your Lord, I have washed your feet.....Do to each other what I have done for you.

No servant is greater than the one who sent him. Now that you know this, blessed are you if you behave accordingly”

Reflect on the words of Jesus..... What do these words mean for how you will live your life?

You have shared in the Last Supper with Jesus and his disciples.....Jesus has washed your feet tenderly.....he has looked into your eyes with love and compassion.....Think for a moment on what you have experienced.....Again what does Jesus want from you? Think about what Jesus is facing.....What do you want to say to Jesus?.....

*Finish this time of prayer by saying: Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen*

## **The Resurrection**

It is early morning, still dark.....

You are walking through a garden in the company of a woman whose hand is holding yours.....

Her face is etched in lines of grief.....

Her eyes are bright with unshed tears.....

Huge waves of sorrow radiate from her - and they seem to wash over you too.....

You, too, ache with a powerful sense of loss.....

Jesus, the Beloved, is dead.....

His broken body has been laid in a tomb which belongs to the man who owns this garden – and it is towards this tomb that the woman, Mary of Magdala, is leading you both.

Mary quickens her steps as the tomb comes into sight.....

“Who has moved the stone?” she gasps, pointing to the entrance of the tomb, which lies open.....the heavy stone which had covered the entrance is lying to one side.

You both look into the tomb.....to find the body of Jesus gone,..... the linen cloths which had covered his body lying on the ground.....

Mary utters a heartfelt cry. Tears stream from her eyes.....and huge sobs rack her body.....

To your amazement, out of the darkness of the inner tomb appear two angels dressed in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had lain, one at the head and one at the feet.....

“Why do you weep?” they ask Mary.....

Through her blinding tears Mary replies:

“They have taken my Lord away and I don’t know where they have put him.”

And then you both sense a presence behind you. Turning around, you see a figure standing outside in the light.

“Why do you weep?” the figure asks Mary gently.

Mary, thinking it is the gardener, replies with a question:

“Sir, if you have taken my Lord away, please tell me where you have put him, so that I can go to him.”

And the figure calls her name softly.

“Mary!”

Mary looks at the figure through her tears, and her face slowly dawns with amazement and then with joy.....as she sees that the figure, in truth, is that of Jesus, her Beloved Master.....

Her eyes never leave his.....her face blazes with joy.....

Falling on her knees, she whispers:

“Master!”

Take some time now to feel, with Mary, the joy of the resurrected Jesus.....

Feel his light enter you, reaching into every corner of your being..... filling you with Divine love..... melting your sins away from your soul.....

The powerful light of the resurrection has triumphed over the darkness of sin and death.....

Look, with Mary, into the beautiful face of the risen Christ.....

Tell him that you will strive always to walk in the light of his suffering, of his death, and of his glorious resurrection.....Tell him that you will strive always to live out the life planned for you by God: a life of love, forgiveness and compassion.

Listen as he tells Mary gently to go and give the good news of his resurrection to his followers, and know that you, too, are being told gently to spread the good news.....

And as you take one last lingering look at the risen Christ, let a prayer of joy and gratitude form itself in your mind, a prayer that holds within it the wonder of what you have witnessed with Mary in the garden.....

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## On the Road to Emmaus

Imagine you are walking along a hot, dusty road on your way to the town of Emmaus.....seeping into your soul is a deep sense..... of sadness.....of being..... lost..... alone.....The sun is beating mercilessly down on your head.....everything your tired eyes rest on is parched.....dying.....

Now you have caught up with two other travellers who are also walking in the direction of Emmaus..... they are lost in earnest conversation with one another.....hardly noticing when you are joined by.....a man who has appeared silently out of the bright sunlight..... and is now walking beside you.....A gentle breeze begins to blow..... cooling the hot rays of the sun.....A stream tumbles its way down the hillside, and you stop to drink gratefully..... as do your two fellow travellers.....The stranger looks on quietly.....You notice his eyes.....they are beautiful.....his gaze is compelling.....gentle, wise, compassionate..... all- seeing.....and you have the sense that he is not a stranger at all.....that, somehow, you have met his gaze before.....experienced that same extraordinary sense of being..... fully known..... in the deepest recesses of your being.....and fully understood.....fully understood..... and fully loved.....it is a strange sense, a strange feeling.....one that you cannot comprehend.....

The man with the beautiful eyes now asks the two men what it is that preoccupies them so much and eagerly they tell him in a torrent of words, marvelling that he hasn't heard already, all about Jesus.....his power and his greatness before God and all the people.....his betrayal by Judas and the chief priests.....his terrible suffering and, finally, his death..... his death which has left them confounded and confused..... because they believed that he was the one who would redeem Israel.....And now there are rumours that his body is missing.....that he may be alive.....that angels have been seen at his tomb..... At that the man with the beautiful eyes gently chides them for their failure to truly comprehend and believe all that the prophets have spoken about the Messiah.....and beginning with Moses he explains eloquently all that has been said in the Scriptures about Jesus, the Messiah,.....about the meaning of his suffering.....his death.....his rising from the dead.....and his words enter your soul and embed themselves there.....you are filled with a knowledge and understanding of the truth as never before.....all sadness has been dispelled.....you feel you could walk forever by the side of this man with the beautiful eyes who seems to have the knowledge of God.....

The two followers of Jesus are also reluctant to part with the stranger.....on arriving at Emmaus they invite him to eat with them and shelter with them for the night.....and you, too, find yourself sitting at table with them looking into the beautiful eyes of the other guest.....He takes bread, gives thanks, breaks it and gives it to his hosts.....there is a gasp as their eyes are instantly opened and they recognise him, falling on their knees and calling out, "Jesus, Master, Son of God, it is you.....truly risen from the dead".....and as silently as he first appeared, he is gone.....

You find yourself out on the road again.....but this time, Jesus, fully revealed, is waiting for you, "Walk with me," he says, his face radiating compassion and love, "Walk with me

and I shall never leave your side”.....and he takes your hand in his.....feel the gentle strength of his hand holding yours..... feel the warmth and comfort of his presence.....and know as you have never known before that if you choose with your heart, mind and soul to walk with Jesus, he will lead you safely and surely into the presence of his Father.....and you will become one with the Love which casts out all fear, all sadness, all tears, the Love which confounds death and throws open the gates of Eternity.....

Take a few minutes to reflect on the experience you have just been through.....Imagine yourself again, alone, walking along an empty, lonely road.....Now let your faith surge through you .....and cry out to Jesus in your heart, “Jesus, I choose to walk with you!”.....Now feel his presence walking beside you..... feel the gentle strength of his hand holding yours.....Let the words of a prayer take shape in your mind.....feel gratitude wash over you for the miracle of Jesus walking beside you.....

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## **The Lost Sheep**

Imagine you are walking through a gate into a beautiful , green meadow. Sunshine is warm on your face. The air is flower-scented and fresh, and as you breathe it in deeply, you can feel it reaching into every corner of your being, filling you with a sense of well-being. You hear birdsong from high up in the trees and in the distance, seated on a grassy hillock under the shade of a tree, is a figure dressed in white. Jesus, for the figure in white you instinctively know is Jesus, is looking in your direction. He beckons you towards him and gestures to the space beside him for you to sit there. When you are seated he begins to speak.

“There was a shepherd who guarded his flock from danger day and night. He knew his sheep and his lambs by name – never overlooking one when he counted them morning and evening. One evening he discovered to his great dismay that one of his lambs was missing. He searched for hours for his missing lamb, and even though a storm was raging, he continued his search right through the night – until at last he found the lamb huddled, shivering and terrified, in a cold rocky place on the mountain. The shepherd lifted the lamb up into his arms, covered his shivering body in his warm cloak, and carried him safely back to the rest of the flock. “Because,” Jesus says, looking into your eyes, his face shining with love, “the Good Shepherd who knows his flock will never rest while one of his flock is missing. He will search night and day, day and night, until he finds that lost sheep and brings him safely home.”

Jesus lays his hand gently on your head. Your eyes are becoming heavy with the heat of the day. Drowsiness overcomes you and you feel yourself falling into a deep sleep. You wake to find yourself in a cold, hard place on a mountain - alone and frightened. You have wandered carelessly away from safety and now you are completely lost. You hear strange animal noises. Wolves! Your heart is pounding with terror. Will anyone notice that you’ve wandered away? And if they do, will they come looking for you – or will they punish you for getting lost by

leaving you to the wolves? You're ice-cold in this freezing dark. Nobody is coming for you now – except, more than likely, the fierce hungry wolves that you feel sure you can hear snarling close by.

And then suddenly, you feel yourself being lifted up into someone's arms, someone's breath is warm on your face, someone's rough, warm cloak is wrapped around your shivering body. "I've searched for you all night, little lost one," a voice says softly, "and now I rejoice because I have found you." And you are looking into the loving face of the Good Shepherd who is holding you close.

"I thought I was lost forever," you say tearfully to the Good Shepherd, "but you kept searching for me until you found me."

The Good Shepherd looks deeply into your eyes and his words reach into your heart.

"I will never abandon even the littlest of my flock," he says. "I will search day and night, night and day, until the lamb that is lost is found. Sleep now. We shall soon be home." And in the warmth of his arms you sleep. And you wake to find yourself back in the flower-scented meadow looking into the beautiful compassionate face of Jesus.

It is time to leave the meadow and as you walk towards the gate, you turn around once to wave farewell to Jesus and your heart is filled with peace and joy, because you know that you will never be abandoned no matter how far or how often you wander away. No matter how lost, how frightened you are you know that Jesus will search for you day and night, night and day, until he finds you; and he will wrap you warmly in his cloak, and carry you safely home.

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### **Advent and the Magnificat**

I want you to imagine that you are looking through, as it were, the fourth wall of a room in a house in Nazareth, where a young girl is kneeling in silent prayer.....Look deeply into the face of the young girl..... you sense that she is entirely at one with God.....and you sense that she is waiting.....waiting .....and listening.....you sense that she has lived her young life up until now in a state of humble, patient waiting.....

There is a stillness and a silence at the heart of the scene you are witnessing.....Give yourself over to the light of the stillness and silence in which the young girl is bathed..... You, too, are waiting, like Mary, for the words God wants you to hear.....You, too, know with certainty that you will hear God's voice.....but only if you give yourself over, in stillness and silence,.....to the same readiness to say yes to God's will as Mary did.....and with the same humility, gratitude, and love that Mary showed.

Now I want you to imagine that you are looking through, as it were, the fourth wall of the house of Elizabeth, in the hill country of Judah. Elizabeth is Mary's cousin and she, too, is with child: as foretold to Mary by the angel Gabriel, Elizabeth, in her old age, is to become the mother of John the Baptist.

Mary has given her famous consent to becoming the Mother of God: 'Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done to me according to thy word,' In humble, prayerful silence Mary has waited to hear what it is God wants from her, and with bowed head, she has said yes to His will.....yes to the joy of her son's birth; yes to lovingly watching him grow with grace into young manhood; yes to teaching him about the birds of the air and the flowers of the field – and yes to the sword which will, one day, pierce both their sides.

And now, in haste, she has come to offer her service to her cousin, who, having clasped her in her arms, falls to her knees and cries out her wonder that she should be honoured by a visit from the mother of her Lord. Mary's reply is a hymn of praise to God:

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### **The Magnificat**

My soul magnifies the Lord

And my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour;

Because He has regarded the lowliness of His handmaid;

For behold, henceforth all generations shall call me blessed;

Because He who is mighty has done great things for me,  
and holy is his name;

And His mercy is from generation to generation  
on those who fear Him.

He has shown might with His arm,

He has scattered the proud in the conceit of their heart.

He has put down the mighty from their thrones,  
and has exalted the lowly.

He has filled the hungry with good things,  
and the rich He has sent away empty.

He has given help to Israel, His servant, mindful of His mercy

Even as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his seed for ever.

Look deeply into Mary's upturned face, transfixed with joy, as she prays her humble gratitude and awe-struck adoration to the great God of Love, who has 'put down the mighty from their thrones and has exalted the lowly.'

Now I want you to imagine yourself in a clean, bare room. You are seated on a chair and you are waiting, waiting patiently and humbly for .....you are not sure what..... You

only know that you are waiting.....and listening.....Give yourself over to the quiet, patient waiting and the quiet patient listening.....

You hear your name being called. It is the voice of God calling softly.....saying with great tenderness: I have known you since before you were in your mother's womb. I have called you by your name.....You are mine.....I hold you in the palm of my hand..... You are precious in my sight.....

And your whole being is filled with knowledge of how loved you are by God.....how unique and special you are to God.....The whole world may ignore you but to God you are shining with the miraculous beauty of your uniqueness.

Wait with humility, gratitude and patience, as Mary did.....wait and listen to what God is asking of you.....wait patiently in this Advent of your life..... and you will hear to what God is asking you to say yes.....as Mary said yes, with humility, gratitude and love.....

What is it in your felt life that God is asking you for? What is it He wants you to do? What is God's plan for your life? If you listen and wait in His beautiful gift of silence, you will hear God's voice, low and calm, sure and clear, telling you what His will is for your life.....

Let the words of the prayer being fashioned in your heart drift into your mind.....wait in patient surrender.....the same patience and surrender which Mary showed as she waited to hear God's plan for her.....for the courage that Mary showed when she said yes to that powerful and terrifying request from God.....wait for the prayer which will help you to value the stillness and the silence which it is in your power to create.....at the heart of which you will hear the voice of God unfold His plan for you.....

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## **Martha and Mary**

In the course of their journey he came to a village, and a woman named Martha welcomed him into her house. She had a sister called Mary, who sat down at the Lord's feet and listened to him speaking. Now Martha, who was distracted with all the serving, came to him and said, "Lord, do you not care that my sister is leaving me to do the serving all by myself? Please tell her to help me" But the Lord answered, "Martha, Martha," he said, "you worry and fret about so many things, and yet few are needed, indeed only one. It is Mary who has chosen the better part, and it is not to be taken from her."

Imagine that you are Martha and that you are preparing for Jesus to visit your home. If you don't prepare everything yourself, it won't get done. Nothing will get done unless you do it yourself. That Mary is worse than useless; that dreamy nature of hers doesn't go with hard work. And she never stops talking about Jesus. She remembers every word she's ever heard him speak and she quotes him all the time, her face glowing as she lingers with wonder on every syllable he's ever uttered.

And she is fascinated by all the stories he tells.....

You're usually too busy slaving over housework and cooking to follow about after Jesus, but not Mary!

If she hears that he is in the vicinity she's off like a hare to hear him speak. The other day she left the sewing you gave her to do, threw it up in the air and dashed out the door, leaving you to pick it up and finish it.....

And you love Jesus as much as she does.....

And you want to hang on to his every word too, and retell his wonderful stories, like the one about the prodigal son and his loving, forgiving father..... and the one about the ungrateful servant.....but you don't have the time. If only Mary would just pull her weight in the house, you'd have a better chance of spending more time with Jesus.

Here he is now at the door.....

You smile into his face as you welcome him.....

Oh, the peace he brings with him!

The love in every line of his face

And his wonderful eyes which seem to look into your very soul, full of knowledge and understanding and tenderness.....such tenderness, you can feel tears spring to your eyes.....

But, you can smell the bread is ready and you rush to take it out of the oven. Mary, of course, is sitting at Jesus' feet, instead of taking the bread out of the oven as you asked her to. Wouldn't you love to be able to sit at the feet of Jesus, only you haven't the time. Who is going to get the food ready if you don't? She hasn't done a tap all day. And look at her gazing up into his face, drinking in his every word. And he is looking at her so tenderly.....Oh, it isn't fair. "I'm going to complain in a minute," you say to yourself. "Jesus needs to know how hard-pressed I am and how selfish Mary is."

And you march up to Jesus and you blurt out, "Lord, do you not care that my sister is leaving me to do all the serving by myself? Tell her to help me!"

And Jesus takes your hands and calls you softly by your name.

"You are so distracted, dear friend," he says gently. "Why are you so distracted? You worry and fret about so many things, but only one thing is needed. Your sister has chosen the better part."

And you are instantly filled with the realisation that the "better part" Jesus is talking about is attending to his words. Mary has always known this. There is no real need to fuss or fret. You feel yourself blush with shame. How could you have got it so wrong! But Jesus looks at you tenderly.

"Sit beside me," he says, "and tell me your distractions. I will take them all away."

And you tell Jesus about the things that worry you, and he soothes your mind as he talks about his father, the God of love, about his forgiving and merciful nature, his intimate and loving knowledge of each and every one of us.

“What do I need, Lord, to make my life more pleasing to God,” you ask Jesus.

“Balance, my dear friend,” he answers, looking into your eyes. “You welcomed me into your house today and prepared food for me, and that is good. But you must learn to rest in me also and to listen as I light your way to my father. Balance, Martha. I am the balance. Rest in me and I will keep you whole.”

Rest in Jesus. Feel equilibrium, balance, being restored to your life, steadying you, making you whole. Yes, there are things which demand your attention, but they should never consume all of your time. We must always make time to rest in Jesus, to rest in his words, to listen in quiet and silence as he tells us about his father, the God of love, the God whose presence fills the universe, yet who knows each of us by name.

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### **The Birth of Jesus**

Imagine you are walking along the road leading to the town of Bethlehem. You are weary because you have already walked a long distance.....but your weariness cannot dispel the glow of excitement radiating from deep within you.....You know that you are walking towards an event which is the most powerful the world has ever known, or ever will know.

A man and a woman are walking ahead of you.....The man’s arm is about the woman’s shoulder protectively.....and she leans against him wearily. As you draw alongside you can see that she is not much more than a girl. She is with child. The man is older; his face is full of concern for his wife..... you can sense his anxiety as he looks down into her pale, exhausted face.....

You offer to help with their heavy bags and the man gratefully accepts.....His young wife smiles gently through her weariness.

You have arrived at the inn where you know the couple hope to stay. The man approaches the innkeeper, who is busy showing people to their quarters, and asks him for lodgings for the night.....He points to his distressed, exhausted young wife.....He tells the innkeeper that she is shortly to give birth.....The innkeeper glances from the couple in dire need of accommodation to others less needy but who are rudely jostling for place.....After a few moments he says decisively to the exhausted young woman’s husband: “There is no more room in my inn. Take your wife to a stable I own nearby and look after her there.”

Your heart aches for the couple who are now wearily making their way through the fields to the stable, the husband practically carrying his wife in his arms. You follow behind, still carrying their bags.

Darkness is already gathering, but suddenly, a light shines from directly above, illuminating the stable just ahead.....You look up and see the brightest star you have ever seen shedding its light all around.....keeping the stable at its centre.....

The light envelops you in its glorious warmth, reaching into the deepest core of your being.....filling you with breath-taking joy.....filling you with the knowledge

that a miracle has happened.....a miracle of earth-shattering proportions..... a miracle which will change the world forever. In a state of wonder and awe, you approach the stable and enter.....and find the young wife, Mary, holding her new-born son in her arms.....and she is smiling through her tears.....Joseph, her husband, gazes at both of them out of eyes shining with love and tenderness.....and you are part of the wonder and beauty of it all as you draw nearer to the little family bathed in the light from above.....And you know you are in the presence of the Son of God.....This tiny infant lying gently on his mother's breast is the longed-for Saviour of mankind.....This infant whose eyes are closed, whose tiny hands and feet are curled tenderly in his mother's arms, will, one day, look with compassionate eyes on the suffering, reach out to the sick with healing hands, walk across the road with steady tread to embrace the rejected, the lonely and the despised.....Your heart is bursting with the wonder of it.

There is a place deep-buried in our hearts under a weight of tinsel and excess, which longs for the wonder and simple beauty of that first Christmas.....Gaze into the face of the sleeping infant.....Let yourself experience the profound meaning of his birth.....Immerse yourself in the light of the birth of the Saviour of Mankind.....feel it enter your soul and fill you with the glorious joy of your salvation.....

Let that joy rest in the quiet and peace of the stable at Bethlehem..... Let words form themselves into a prayer in the joyful silence of your soul.....

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### **The Calming of the Storm**

Imagine you are sitting by the sea of Galilee. The sun is warm on your face. The sand trickles through your fingers like silk. You are breathing in lungfuls of clean sea air and you can feel it reach into every corner of your being, filling you with health and vigour. You feel alive, open, alert.

You sense a presence beside you. You turn your head and find yourself looking into the beautiful face of Jesus who has come, with his disciples and others, to rest beside you on the sand. He begins to speak about the love that God, his father, has for us, a love that we can trust with all of our hearts, all of our minds. God's love, Jesus tells us, is compassionate, unconditional and forgiving. It is a love which we can trust to comfort and console us in times of darkness and danger, a love which floods us with light in times of joy.

His words fill you with peace and confidence and, above all, with gratitude. How great it is to know that God never fails us if we have faith in Him; that He will never, ever, betray our trust in His love.

It is early evening and the heat is beginning to drain from the day. Jesus turns to his disciples and says:

“Let us cross over to the other side.”

Jesus takes your hand in his and leads the way on to one of the boats waiting on the shore. As the boat moves out on the water, Jesus takes a cushion and, lying down in the stern of the vessel, he places the cushion under his head and falls asleep. You look into his sleeping face; it is serene, peaceful; his breathing is calm and gentle.

Suddenly the boat lurches in the water: a storm has erupted out of nowhere. The winds howl and roar; the waves tower over the boat and threaten to engulf it. The boat lurches sickeningly again. The disciples cry out in terror; you cry out in terror too. Jesus sleeps on peacefully.

“Master, master,” the disciples cry, shaking him, “help us, help us! We are lost!”

Jesus opens his eyes, stands up in the boat and, raising his arms, he quietly calms the storm, bidding the waters to be quiet and the winds to cease their howling. When the waters are calm again he turns and takes you all into his gaze.

“Why were you so frightened?” he rebukes gently; “Where is your faith?”

And you all look at one another in awe and amazement, and then at Jesus who is standing there quietly, as if unaware of the miracle he has just performed.

The boat carries you safely to the other side of the sea of Galilee and again Jesus takes your hand in his and leads you all to a place of rest. Take time now to be with Jesus and to talk to him about your hopes, your cares and your concerns.

You wake from your rest, refreshed and calm, knowing it is time to leave, time to say good-bye.

*Finish this time of prayer by saying: Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen*

## **The Gift of Pentecost**

Imagine you have just entered an upper room in a house in Jerusalem where you know the friends of Jesus are gathering .....and they are there.....huddled together.....fearful, ... grieving the loss of their beloved Jesus, who has left them to be with his father in Heaven.....Observe their faces .....look at the lines newly-etched around their eyes and mouths.....lines you know which have been caused by terror and grief.....Their Lord and Master, their beloved Teacher, Jesus, is no longer with them..... They fear he may have abandoned them.....in their terror that their lives are in danger, they have forgotten Jesus’ assurances that he will never abandon them, that he will send them the Holy Spirit to fill them with courage.....all they can feel now is his absence, his physical absence.....his beautiful, compassionate gaze.....his words of wisdom.....his wonderful forgiving nature.....the confidence and courage they always feel in his presence.....how can they live without him? Feel your heart go out in loving sympathy to these bereft men.....feel yourself sharing in their grief.....and loneliness.....and .....terror.....feel yourself sharing in their terror that, perhaps, they have been abandoned by Jesus and are now at the mercy of his enemies..... and you feel their pain because you, too, know what it is to experience fear, and, perhaps, loneliness, even grief.....you, too, sometimes search for Jesus and fail to

find him..... You, too, sometimes find it hard to feel the presence of Jesus when you can't see him, when he is not physically present.... you, too, can feel abandoned, left behind at the mercy of danger.....

Suddenly, the whole house is gripped and shaken violently by a thunderous noise..... as if all the winds of the heavens have joined together for battle.....and then.....there appears suspended in the room..... a fire..... in the shape of tongues.....the sight of which fills everyone present with amazement and disbelief .....The tongues separate and come to rest on the head of each person in the room, including yours.....Feel the heat of the tongue of fire rest on your head.....a wonderful heat that doesn't burn..... but courses through your body.....filling you with warmth and..... light.....filling you with courage and confidence.....You look around at the others in the room and see that they have all been transfigured also.....all fear has left them.....they are no longer huddled together.....but are standing tall.....their faces blazing with joy and light.....”Let us go out,” Peter says, “Let us go out and proclaim the word of God. Let us tell the world about Jesus, our Saviour, who taught us that God, his Father, is love, and that no one can claim to love God while harbouring vengeance or malice towards his brother in his heart.....Let us tell the world that we have not been abandoned by Jesus.....that he is with us for eternity if we believe in him.....that he has, as he promised, sent the Holy Spirit down to us today, filling us with courage and confidence, and love for all mankind, even those who may persecute us in the future.....even those who hate us and wish us ill.....And you, too, are filled with courage and confidence.....you, too, want to go out and proclaim the Good News of God's love for us.....

Out in the street, crowds have gathered.....people from all over the world who have come to Jerusalem to pray.....and to their amazement, the disciples begin to speak to them..... with fire and passion..... in their own language..... How can this be?.....These disciples of Jesus are ordinary men.....They are not learned men.....How are they able to speak so many different languages?

And now you, too, begin to speak with fire and passion, unafraid, filled with a burning desire to bring Jesus to these people.....and filled with the wisdom to know that the way to do this is to become the love of Jesus in the world.....the kindness of Jesus.....the compassion of Jesus.....the forgiving heart of Jesus.....the healing hands of Jesus.....the feet of Jesus which will carry you to the poor and the lonely, the rejected and the despised who are waiting for your embrace.....and you realise the full impact of the gifts you have been given by the Holy Spirit..... gifts of courage, of wisdom, of confidence.....

And you realise that you, too, are able to communicate with people from all over the world.....because you are speaking the language of love.....the language of compassion.....of forgiveness.....of kindness.....and all people understand the language of love.....

For a few minutes think on the glorious mystery of our three-personed God: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.....three in a Oneness of love.....the Father, the benign loving protector.....the Son.....who became human in order to teach us how to live in love.....the Holy Spirit, the Giver of Gifts of wisdom, understanding, courage.....and more.....What do you want to say to God?.....Let what you want to say flow gently

into that sacred space in your mind.....words of gratitude.....words of supplication, of asking.....words of praise for the wonder of the three-personed God.....let the words come.....

*Finish this time of prayer by saying: Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen*

### **Guided Meditation: The Wedding Feast at Cana**

I want you to imagine that you are walking along a hot, dusty road in Galilee on your way to the town of Cana. The sun is warm on your face. Richly hued flowers spill their blossoms over courtyard walls filling the air with their sweet scents. On your left a bright stream tumbles down from the hills and spills itself onto the thirsty landscape.

You have now reached the town of Cana and you make your way to the house where a wedding is taking place. You are guided to the wedding hall which is alive with the sounds of talk and laughter.

You are led to an empty seat at one of the tables and as you sit down, the figure beside you turns to you and smiles, and you realise that you are looking into the beautiful face of Jesus. On his right is his mother, Mary, her gentle face wearing a look of concern. "They have no more wine," she whispers to her son, and you know instinctively that her concern is for the wedding hosts who, she fears, will be shamed before their guests for having run out of wine.

"What can I do?" Jesus responds. "You know my time has not yet come."

And now you, too, are filled with concern for the wedding hosts who are about to be shamed in front of their friends and neighbours and relatives. But Mary, obviously knowing her son and his compassionate heart better than you do, quietly calls the servants over.

"Do whatever my son tells you," she whispers, and they nod their heads.

Take a moment to immerse yourself in the warmth of the loving relationship between Jesus and Mary: the understanding, the knowledge and acceptance of God's will on which it is founded. Jesus knows the pain and suffering which lies ahead for his mother and his heart aches with the knowledge. He will refuse her nothing.

Jesus points towards six huge water jars and quietly instructs the servants to fill them with water, which they do.

"Now draw some of the jar's contents," Jesus tells a servant, "and take it to the organiser of the wedding feast so that he may taste."

"This wine is the best wine I have ever tasted," the organiser says to the bridegroom, "Why on earth have you kept it until last? Your guests are too well wined now to appreciate the excellent quality of this wine."

And Mary looks at her son, whose head is bowed in prayer, and her face overflows with love and gratitude. And she turns her face to you over the bowed head of her son and her gentle smile floods you with joy as she speaks words from her heart straight to your heart.

“Bring me your needs, your cares and your concerns,” her mother’s heart is saying, “and I will ask my son to come to your aid. Your Saviour, my son, always listens to me, and never refuses me.”

It is time to leave the wedding hall and as you turn at the door to wave good-bye to Mary and Jesus, your heart is bursting with love and gratitude. Mary, the mother of Jesus –and your mother too, - has told you that she will carry your needs and your cares to her son, and she will speak on your behalf to him, who refuses her nothing.

What a wonderful gift you have been given at this wedding feast at Cana!

Take some time alone now to talk to Mary, your mother. Fashion your needs and cares into a prayer and ask Mary to lay your prayer at the feet of her son.

*Finish this time of prayer by saying: Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen*



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